



Critical Practice Notes #3, Spring 2017

Newsletter #3, Spring 2017

While Donald Trump may have won the presidency, he hasn't changed our values. We will not be dragged back into the past. We will lead the resistance to any effort that would shred our social fabric or our Constitution. ...

California was not a part of this nation when its history began, but we are clearly now the keeper of its future.

-Joint Statement from California Legislative Leaders on Result of Presidential Election, Wednesday, November 09, 2016

Like some of you I've been nursing a Trump conditioned anxiety disorder, manifesting as sleep disruption; nightmares staring elected neo-American Nazi zombies, insomnia conditioned by dread of environmental deregulation, an early waking syndrome characterized by reading online news & not falling back to sleep.

I'm not used to following federal policy & politics so closely, as I've been these last months. While I was broadly involved with the resistance to Bush's wars & responded effectively to Obama's economic policies, until now I haven't been suckered into the minutiae of Federal governance reporting. Since around Occupy in 2011, my interests in cultural production began to pivot toward the powers of citizen-directed policy making as a means to structure society (partly in-response to the affective politics typifying much (but not all of) the American Occupy protests). The current regime's authoritarianism is terrifying. Buoying this terror however, has been California exceptionalism, since November 9th, dwelling in my back pocket as its own trump card in the form of the magnificent Spanish & English proclamation by California State legislative leaders, Anthony Rendon & Kevin de León.

Calexit, that's what some call California secession (senators Rendon & de León aren't calling for it). The seduction of Ernest Callenbach's *Ecotopia* & Sandow Birk's *Great War* narrative tableaus come to mind amongst the fictional telling of West Coast separatism, easily memed as #Calexit. A worthwhile metaphor but probably a political fantasy so

catchy that its prehistory is inscribed onto our California landscape, The Free State Of Jefferson, The Gay County of Alpine, The Llano Del Rio Colony, countless back-to-the-land communities. So the fiction of a Calexit however is as real as the disgraced Russo-American backers of what's probably an exciting distraction. The logical contradiction of Calexit's West Coast sedition (Remembers the Civil War? Welcome the tyranny of NorCal techno-libertarians?) is squared through something very tangible & already in the sights of the Trump regime, sanctuary cities.

The right to the city is, therefore, far more than a right of individual or group access to the resources that the city embodies: it is a right to change & reinvent the city more after our hearts' desire. It is, moreover, a collective rather than an individual right, since reinventing the city inevitably depends upon the exercise of a collective power over the processes of urbanization. The freedom to make & remake ourselves & our cities is, I want to argue, one of the most precious yet most neglected of our human rights. How best then to exercise that right?

-David Harvey, *Rebel Cities*

In his 2012 book *Rebel Cities*, David Harvey highlights the historic tension in cities between those who make their lives there & those who legislate massive capital expenditures by redesigning cities to develop more capital, disrupting lives. Harvey highlights that a tool of finance is the articulation of whom, where, & how someone has the right to be accorded a voice in this process. This question of political participation, who counts as a subject in a particular political economic relationship-whether a citizen or not, is at the center of schemes to control processes in the United States. Harvey also discusses the moments where capital flight has created opportunities for popular insurrection, where the right to the city is articulated from the bottom up. From the Paris Communes to the economic crisis of last decade that roiled the continents, echoing into the 2016 USA election.

While Occupy & the Tea Party in the States, Syriza in Greece, & The Arab Spring have all defined moments of democratic openings, it is Spain's 15-M Movement that has

the strongest record of success in terms of creating lasting governing institutions. Since the 2011 15-M, a movement based on the wholesale rejection of Spanish austerity laws & political leaders who stood for them, Municipalism (the control & management of a city by & for its actual residents <renters & homeowners> rather than capitalists) has articulated the right to a city, which people discovered had to be fought over throughout all levels of government; from local elections to the national level. Activists & organizers soon found that to really win locally meant having to change laws across the entire political terrain so that they function for the many people who call the city home.

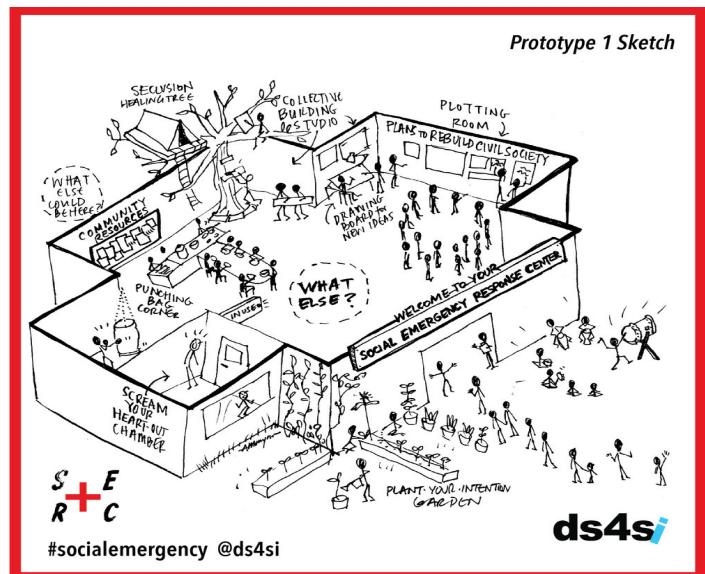
As the calls to resist Trump continue (and fade), & as the lure of a Calexit expand (and fade), the need for cities, communities, & *all* residents to work in the interest of those who make their lives together, will persist. Because the desire for sanctuary from illogical order remains a constant, & the illegitimate & undocumented will persist in making lives for themselves, I'm presenting in this Critical Practice Newsletter two interviews that help expand my understanding of this "right to the city." They include a conversation with Morton Goll of Denmark's Trampoline House, & an interview with Spanish designers from ZEMOS 98.

Initiated by artists & curator Goll & Tone Nielsen, Trampoline House provides services & a home to Denmark's foreign asylum seekers. It aims to expand the articulation of Danish Democracy, directly inspired by Giorgio Agamben's articulation of spaces of democratic crisis. Zemos 98 is a Spanish media production collaborative, whom along with illustrator María Castelló, in 2015 developed a diagram called *Recipe For A Municipal Movement*. This diagram is an intriguing glimpse into the historic narratives underlying the wholly foreign yet oddly familiar Spanish Municipalism movement demanding the right to the city.

California State Senators Rendon & de León declared in their statement "California is – & must always be – a refuge of justice & opportunity for people of all walks, talks, ages & aspirations – regardless of how you look, where you live, what language you speak, or who you love." Trump's presidency has done one service, offering a larger percentage of the nation a view they'd not necessarily imagined before – that of Agamben's *bare life*, a view of the precariat, the refuge, the asylum seeker, those lacking papers & a right to live free of fear.

In this newsletter I've also reproduced graphics from Boston's Design Studio For Social Innovation. The studio is developing & promoting the concept of the Social Emergency Response Center (SERC). Lori Lobenstein, of the studio, suggests they developed the SERC imagining people needed a public platform where they could collectively respond to the state of exception ruling our lives.

They perceived that while there is a known emergency response infrastructure for fire, earthquakes, floods, & tornadoes, there is none for a large-scale crisis of democracy. Their community social emergency response centers, like Trampoline House, are places for neighbors to find information, food, healing & shelter amidst the breakdown of community norms. This metaphor acknowledges a need for language & space for owning our built environments & acting with imagination on its collective interest. The sanctuary metaphor, echoed through this *CPNotes* answers to immigrants & asylum seekers as much as it does any one awake in the era of Trump.



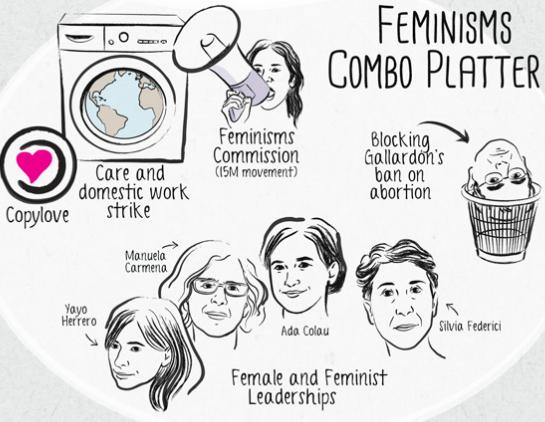
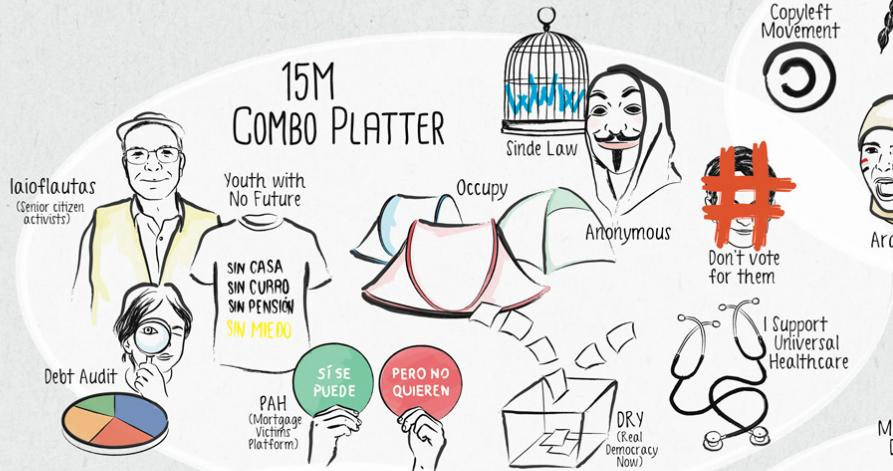
The Social Emergency Resource Center is a typology for a community space developed by Boston's Design Studio For Social Innovation. The 1st SERC operated Trump's inaugural weekend. The studio's Lori Lobenstein says it's where people can "step into a relationship with their neighbors."

What's The Recipe For Municipal Movement?

Interviewed in CP Notes #2, readers know Alan Moore is a tremendous source of knowledge on autonomous movements. He's been hippling me to all things Spanish stemming from the 15M movement. 15M led to political reform from the grassroots up, fostering socialistic parties & a radical civil movements where people demand the right to their cities. The narrative of contemporary Spanish politics tilts strongly against the story of the rise of fascism & isolationism in Western democracies. Alan showed me the graphic (Page 3) *What's The Recipe For A Municipal Movement*. I tracked down its illustrator María Castelló Solbes who got me in touch with Lucas Tello Pérez of ZEMOS 98, the images producer. We talked about the image & its context.



WHAT'S THE RECIPE FOR A MUNICIPAL MOVEMENT?



CP - Can you provide some background for a foreign reader of the Recipe?

ZEMOS 98 - The 15M in Spain was the awakening of major fragments of society to a different way of understanding politics, unmediated by the traditional political parties. After three years of deep crisis, & with complete lack of faith in political representation, a protest against property law lit the fuse. Thousands of people set up tents in the main squares of their cities & debated in huge assemblies about the main political struggles society faces, in a respectful manner, with an intersectional approach. This produced a deep shift in the mindset & boosted a culture of sharing & building together.

ZEMOS 98 is a cultural & political collective that's been working from Seville, Spain in local, national & European projects since 1998. We produced 17 editions of an underground festival on the independent media landscape, the commons, feminism, informal education & other issues. We strive for citizen's participation on the issues that shape our future. With local councils we develop participatory processes. We produce media content like the Municipalism graphic & a board game that interprets the present. Like others, the 15M movement turned upside-down our collective's feelings & beliefs. Since then we've turned into a much more politically engaged practice.

Our institutional assault on Spain's government arose 3 years after the end of the 15M movement. In that period there were massive mobilizations called 'the tides'. You could find one for each color; green was about education, white was about public health, & so on. Podemos had great success in the European elections obtaining 5 MEPs out of nothing. The social movements started organizing candidacies to take the local governments in different cities. It started in Barcelona leaded by Ada Colau (a famous activist who was the spokesperson of the Platform Against the Evictions -the PAH) & spread to Madrid & other cities. The elections were in Spring 2015. Activists & social movements won some big Spanish cities: Madrid, Barcelona, Zaragoza, A Coruña, Cádiz, Valencia among others. Our graphic image of the combo-platter was produced 2 months before the elections. It tried to summarize some of the movements that inspired, directly and indirectly, the social movements to take back the institutions.

Two years have passed, & these councils are having different grades of success. ZEMOS98 has collaborated with A

Coruña, Barcelona & mainly Madrid in developing culture plans co-designed by the sector & citizens.

CP - How did you develop the categories and specific menu items in this radical meal?

Z98 - The graphic was developed with illustrator María Castelló. We were working on *Municipal Recipes*, a project representing & reflecting the emerging processes of assaulting the local institutions. Within that framework we thought the metaphor of the kitchen was an interesting way to portray what we wanted that movement to be: an organic group of people reclaiming the cities, making them more livable, removing the spotlight from economic exchange, turning it to caring for each other, creating communities taking part in politics, & building public space together. The kitchen seemed a nice place to devise such a plan.

We went with that idea & shared the group of collectives & social movements we wanted represented with María Castelló. She did the amazing work of putting the pieces together -adding her thoughts- & developed the beautiful graphic. it happened in a short time, and later we realized we'd left some things out. We've also come to realize that some of those items included shouldn't be there. We still think it's a good tool to start thinking about imageries & collectives working toward social change in a radical way.

CP - Did the recipe present ideas already popular in Spanish Society, or were you promoting ideas not yet seen together, providing a vision of this network graphically?

Z98 - It's more the second option. We're promoting ideas that haven't been viewed together before. Maps are like lists: you can't cover everything & you can't satisfy everyone. We've received some fair criticism about including the Italian 5 Stars Movement. When we were conceiving the map their approach to political struggles wasn't clear. After we made the map, it became clear that they aren't exactly left-wing on certain issues. Our intention was to visualize some of the social movements we considered as the foundations of the Municipal Movement. After 2 years there's been less discussion (in media and academic articles) the concept of "municipal movement". Maybe, & because it succeeded somehow, there isn't anymore a *movement* but some effective platforms running some of the Spanish cities. For us, as a matter of research, it was really important to look & try to define the roots of all these political struggles. The recipe is a metaphor. The recipe is a sort of a source code that can be improved by others if it is open & shareable.

CP- Please explain the more esoteric items in the recipe like Copylove, Marinaleda, & Metropolitan Observatory.

Z98 - Copylove was non-academic research ZEMOS98 began with Rubén Martínez from La Hidra & Txelu Balboa from Colaborabora. It gathered first hand experiences looking into the bonds & relationships communities create between agents during the production of common goods. It was very revealing for us in our way of working, because it made us reflect on the relation we were building with each other within the collective, & it changed many of the practices. It made us see caring acts as an invisible common good within communities. Bringing this to light is very important to unveil power relations & build better ways of living together.

Marinaleda is a council in the region of Seville, in the South of Spain. It's been governed by a local party & led by Sánchez Gordillo for around 30 years. It's attempting to build a communist solution to the problems of their neighbors. They have social housing for all, a cooperative that is in charge of giving strength to the workers, a television managed by the council, etc. Dan Hancox, of *The Guardian*, has written several articles & a book about it.

Metropolitan Observatory was a leftist think-tank based in Madrid & Barcelona in charge of producing some of the most exciting & interesting theory about the change of those cities, their public spaces, the way their common goods are managed, & how to build alternatives. As you can imagine, most of the activists working in those cities struggled in different social movements. It was one of those initiatives where folks who've gone on to institutionality were involved organizing events & lectures, publishing books, or designing alternative policies for the cities. Not surprisingly, the Metropolitan Observatory doesn't seem to have been producing work since the municipalism movement started in 2014.

CP- Do all elements in the Municipalism graphic work in harmony? Judging by the strength of en Comú I imagine the movement is robust. I wonder if all of the elements in the graphic contribute to this.

Z98 - This representation simplifies the complexity of what happened & is still happening in Spain. Barcelona & Cataluña are probably the most successful example, not only because Barcelona en Comú won the elections (we should remember they got the 25% of the votes). But there's a history of associationism & cooperation among the civil society actors. That partly explains why the political arena was able

to produce such a platform as Barcelona en Comú. That's interesting because it wasn't even a party then. It was an initiative gathering all kind of bodies such as parties, social movements, small unions, NGOs, etc.

What was robust is the belief that our system needed to be changed. During the 15M according to some polls there was 90% of the population supporting the idea that changes had to be introduced in the way parties were working & acting. Parties were representing their own interests, not peoples. That explained the rapid growth of Podemos at national level, but specially the creation of local initiatives. These strategies weren't created by the same people, there were some huge differences. It's obvious that some political changes can only occur at a national level (protecting the educational system or the health care system). But many activists preferred the municipal context because they felt it was coherent to change things from the bottom, having taken into account the notion of proximity. On the other hand Podemos created a lot of illusion, but it was an initiative lead from a group of people in Madrid mainly.

The 15M acted as a political moment. A lot of people felt the need to be politically involved. Today we aren't sure we can consider the municipal movement as still robust. Many of the most important activists got involved in institutional jobs, fulfilling the promise of occupying the institutions, & changing them inside. But that also "emptied the streets". So in that sense, taking into account the general precariousness Spain is experiencing, it's really hard to maintain citizens political activity because in some cases individuals don't even have resources to survive.

Right now, & following the metaphor of your question it seems we need to start a new map. Not exactly explaining how the municipal movement grew up, but how to re-start the situation to recover the strength of the social movements.

CP- With the results of the 2016 elections in the US many citizens & municipalities are looking to defend gains made in the last decades. Secession is tempting, but so is the anti-federalism of Spain's democratic Municipal Movement. Do you think your recipe is transferable to other nations?

Looking at the example of Cataluña, it's really a complex issue how *federalism* is conceived in Spain. In Cataluña there's people (and people involved in parties like Esquerra Republicana) who truly believe in the self-determination of people. The interesting thing is that they made an alliance with a right wing & Catholic party (Nuevo Partido

Democrático). What happened is that at some point they thought, "Ok, we want to be independent too. But once we are out of Spain, from whom are we going to be independent? From the factual powers such as the Troika?". So before asking for the independence of Cataluña some activists felt there was the need to defend social rights. But that doesn't mean they don't believe in federalism. It means they believe it's a priority to defend citizen's rights. In the rest of Spain it's different. But one of the oldest & now traditional center-left wing parties (the Socialist Party) has a tradition of people supporting federalism. So it's not clear how federalism is assumed by the different political actors.

Secondly, we don't think the recipe can be imported to other places, especially not for those with worse economic or social conditions; that'd be neo-colonialism ;) We do think the idea of having a recipe itself is importable. Sharing practices increases learning processes among peers worldwide. The idea of open source is very powerful & appealing in activism. There aren't magic solution for our social struggles but we can all benefit from sharing certain methodologies/actions/ideas. That's the political lesson we learned. We should share our local recipes for cooking global revolution.



Social emergency centers are “infrastructure ready to be stepped into”. The Design Studio For Social Innovation believes centers must provide four items: info, shelter, food, & healing. Currently they are distributing SERC kits for publics experiencing social emergencies. Mailed kits contain budgets, manuals, signage, and other items.

The Organizers of Denmark's Trampoline House Aren't Democratic Fundamentalists.

Trampoline House is a community center for refugees and asylum seekers living in Copenhagen Denmark. Founded by artist and curator Morten Goll, and Tone Nielsen the house takes what can be described as a “social practice” approach to social services. It not only provides meals, classes, and parties for the foreign born, its practices an inclusive and horizontal form of decision making. I spoke with Goll about Trampoline House after watching an interview with him on the Danish talk show program *Bashy's Corner*.

CP - During the Bashy's Corner interview you said that supporting immigrants is more than a moral act, it's a part of the democratic project, would you explain this?

Morten Goll - The real difference for us is between democracy & charity. Charity can be executed while keeping the precariat disempowered. A lot of charity is performed by conservatives & hypocritical liberals who prefer to keep the victimized at arms length because it confirms the subdued identities of the victimized & their own superiority. If we'd started Trampoline House with the goal of "doing the right thing" Trampoline House would have turned into a charity operation. While there are times when charity is the solution, our point of departure was different.

Democracy is challenged by the exclusion of the precariat. A healing process must include the formation of a more inclusive “we”. Healing democracy is the same as asking the excluded for their help in the salvation process: allowing the precariat to become part of “us”. There is no difference between saving democracy & “supporting immigrants”. One will not happen without the other.

The lesson we've learned in Trampoline House is that it's necessary to be involved in the struggle for immigrant rights out of self-interest. We don't do it to save somebody else, we do it because we need each other in the struggle to shape a better version of democracy.

CP - In the USA, during the era of Lyndon Baines Johnson, the anti-poverty programs enacted by his administration received mixed reviews from the marginal, oppressed & poor communities. While some embraced the net of social programs the federal government advanced, others reacted to them as a means to coopt social-movements & pacify resistant subjects. Radicals of that day were demanding community control over their lives in the manner of the Black Panther, rather than the solutions of capitalist-liberal democracy.

MG - A year ago we met with the Copenhagen Municipality about a collaboration; we hoped to fast track an integration program for asylum seekers & refugees living in the city. They turned us down. Three months later they opened up a Welcome House with an identical program to ours. The differences between Trampoline House & Welcome House (on paper) is that this new house is controlled by the city & only refugees who've been granted asylum are welcome. No

asylum seekers are allowed. This is an example of the desire of the capitalist-liberal democracy to use social movements. They wanted to get the parts of Trampoline House they liked while avoiding what they fear: conversational democracy including the asylum seekers who are considered "almost illegal".

I could respond to your question from a different perspective: that Trampoline House as an institution is attempting to coopt the struggle of the precariat. What if the precariat doesn't want our solutions? What if they want a different kind of social change based on a revolution? This is a question that we ask almost every week at the house meeting. But the people who join us do so voluntarily. They vote with their feet. By the same token it can be argued that our version of democracy is Eurocentric tool employed to control the other. That becomes true the moment we forget our sovereign absolute unconditional mutual respect. I see democracy as some guideline for social processes, rather than an ideology.

CP - I'm wondering if you can define your vision of democracy & the more limited democracy envisioned by those who disagree with the values of Trampoline House?

MG - Our version of democracy is possible in Trampoline House because we refuse to pass judgment about who is legal & who isn't.

I respect that the representative-parliamentarian-democracy we have in Denmark is the best of a poor solution. As all democracies it's full of shortcomings. It lacks transparency, it's too easily overtaken by demagogues, it's too dependent on the dictatorship of the majority. But the problems of representative democracy can be largely overcome at the level of local community, where it's possible to practice conversational democracy in smaller groups (not using the vote, but reaching consensus through dialogue). Conversational democracy, as it's performed in Trampoline House, has an educating empowering effect on participants. This aspect may be the most important feature, since the biggest threat to representative democracy is an uninformed, under educated, population.

I respect & support the liberal democracy as long as it allows a strong undergrowth of grassroots communities to perform a truer version of democracy. The stronger that link between this undergrowth & the parliament is, the better the democracy. For this to work it is important to build communities that allow for difference within. At the community level at Trampoline House we understand the mutual benefit of "respecting the other". The factors keeping the community together is our base line: unconditional mutual respect, our belief that anyone has something to offer the community, & our ability to accept differences in culture, education, religion, gender, & political beliefs. The meeting between these differences is guided by

conversational democracy.

Most politicians in Denmark support active citizenry. The disagreement is about our inclusion of the precariat they claim are illegal & unworthy. I think this is the point were they reveal their hypocrisy. They choose to restrict the rights of the precariat & betray democracy.

Trampoline House doesn't claim to have a solution to "the border control dilemma", but applying a more expansive version of democracy is healthier for the state & its citizens. We insist that citizens can handle the integration process if given the right tools. We believe the "the refugee crisis" has been trumped up intentionally by political demagogues. It's merely a political crisis.

If we could apply conversational democracy in the integration process as it is done in Trampoline House, everyone would soon realize that refugees are not a problem, but an asset. We might find ourselves without a refugee crisis, & people would acknowledge we can integrate 10 times more refugees than we believe today. We still might need a refugee board to keep up with border control, but it wouldn't be a "crisis", because society's capacity to include newcomers would be so much bigger, & the right-wings populist argument would run out of steam. Trampoline House's integration model challenges their notion of Danishness.

You can't have a respectful conversation with the other without being subjected to change. Their demand for seamless assimilation amounts to a kind of colonialism because they believe that Danes have the birth right to a stable mythologized identity, while the newcomer has to adapt to it. Conversational democracy is the perfect antidote to this proto-fascism. It's an extremely powerful tool because 95% of the population wants democracy, but share a growing fatigue in their political representation. There are a few who do not support even the current restrictive democracy. It was mind boggling when MP Marie Krarup (as referred to in the TV interview) accused me for being "democratist", a kind of democracy fundamentalist. Her public support of Vladimir Putin suggests she prefers fascism over democracy. I don't think her views are widely shared in the parliament. But I would argue that her desire to frame me as some kind of fundamentalist comes from a desire to shoot the messenger. The right wing fights us, because we disprove their dystopia & erode their ticket to power.

CP - Entering the world of supportive services for asylum seekers as artists rather than as service advocates, do you think you offered a unique perspective on the issue? Of course I'm asking about "out of the box thinking" regarding the whole conceptualization of the role of the asylum seeker within society, as well as the approach you take at Trampoline House. MG - Probably. When I talk in public about these issues it still feels like people are really

surprised & relieved to hear this topic debated from a perspective based on a firm belief that “we the people” can handle what our politicians have failed at for 40 years. Our point of departure was Agamben’s analysis of the camp as a state of exception, but today our ideas are also informed by 6 years of trial & error, which has taught us, among other things, that the right wing has a point when it claims that our society is challenged by globalization. This has been neglected for too long by the liberal democracy. Agamben is still with us though. Maybe it is our contradictory (artistic?) inclination to search for the ideal, combined with our love for the most beautifully fragile & corruptible process known as *democracy*.



Ken Bailey of the Design Studio for Social Intervention was moved by the acquittal of Darren Wilson in the killing of Michael Brown. He noticed that his friends were carrying on with their daily lives as if nothing was off (or could be done). The S.E.R.C. was developed as a place where society could stop drop and roll, to address these breakdowns in civil society.

Lori Lobenstine of the Design Studio Says that people know how to act in all kinds of emergencies, fires, earthquakes, choking, but folks don't know how to react together in legal and governmental crisis. Lobenstine references William Gibson saying "the future is already here, it's just not evenly distributed." Social Emergency center hope to ameliorate that inequality.

Ephemera Corner

Jessica Fleischmann tells us about her IMMIGRANT sticker.



An affiliation. An alliance. A stand.

November 14, 2016, still in disbelief about the outcome of the election. So many claims are being made about the US. So much that makes no sense. What small, straightforward, concrete, crystalline contradiction can I present? How can I make my voice heard and say something about the country I *mostly* love when it seems the country can't even hear itself?

I am an immigrant.

My family moved here when I was 4. But even if we'd been here for 4 generations, we'd still be immigrants. Aside from indigenous people and the descendants of slaves brought here by force, the US is made of immigrants of circumstance or choice. I claim my own immigrant status to show support for the more recently arrived, and hopefully to contribute to a civil, united conversation. If most everyone's an immigrant, what's the problem?

I'm a graphic designer, so I made a bumper sticker. I made the word as big and clear and impactful as possible. I used bold, square, solid, legible type. I put it on my car.

Sometimes people give me thumbs up on the freeway. They leave nice notes on my car. Sometimes it makes me a better driver. Some times some f*ck rides extra hard on my tail because of it. Regardless I donate all the profits from the sticker to the ACLU, the SPLC, and the NILC.

What's your immigrant story?